

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-05 ONY-00 SS-15 /033 W
-----011450 060822Z /11

P 060526Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2878

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 CANBERRA 2527

STADIS

FOR EA AND PM ONLY

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3
TAGS: IO, AS
SUBJECT: US-AUSTRALIAN INDIAN OCEAN TALKS

1. WHILE AT THE FOREIGN OFFICE YESTERDAY, EMBOFF STOPPED IN TO SAY GOOD-BY TO JOHN BURGESS, WHO IS LEAVING THIS MORNING FOR WASHINGTON FOR THE US-AUSTRALIAN INDIAN OCEAN TALKS. BURGESS, IN THE COURSE OF CONVERSATION, MENTIONED THAT SOVIET AMBASSADOR TO AUSTRALIA BASOV HAD BEEN IN ON INSTRUCTIONS TO ASK THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT IF THEY WOULD LIKE TO SEND A TEAM TO MOSCOW FOR DISCUSSIONS ON THE INDIAN OCEAN. GOA WAS A BIT SURPRISED BY THE SOVIET APPROACH, THE FIRST SPECIFIC MENTION THE SOVIETS HAD MADE OF SITTING DOWN WITH AUSTRALIANS TO DISCUSS INDIAN OCEAN ARMS LIMITATIONS, AND THE INITIAL AUSTRALIAN REACTION WAS A BIT NEGATIVE. BURGESS SAID THE GOA HAD NOT TURNED THE SOVIETS DOWN, BUT SIMPLY THOUGHT THIS WAS NOT AN OPPORTUNE MOMENT. GOA HAS, HOWEVER, TAKEN THE PROPOSAL ABOARD, AND MAY MENTION IT IN WASHINGTON TO SEE WHETHER THERE IS ANY US REACTION.

2. BURGESS ALSO SHOWED EMBOFF A COPY OF THE PRINCIPAL INTERNAL AUSTRALIAN POSITION PAPER TO BE USED BY THE
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AUSTRALIAN TEAM IN THE TALKS IN WASHINGTON NEXT WEEK. TEXT FOLLOWS, BUT THE FACT THAT WE HAVE IT SHOULD BE VERY CAREFULLY PROTECTED (FOR WHICH REASON THIS CABLE IS CAPTIONED STADIS), PARTICULARLY FROM THE REMAINDER OF THE AUSTRALIAN DELEGATION. REQUEST EA AND PM SHARE THE TEXT WITH OTHERS AS YOU BELIEVE NECESSARY, BEARING IN MIND THE NEED TO PROTECT FACT THAT WE HAVE IT, AND SPECIFICALLY

THE FACT THAT IT CAME FROM BURGESS.

3. BEGIN TEXT:

THE VIEWS OF THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT, SPECIFICALLY RELATED TO DELIMITATION OF THE INDIAN OCEAN AREA AND THE DEPLOYMENT OF NAVAL FORCES THERE, WERE CONVEYED TO MR. VANCE BY THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ON 10 NOVEMBER 1977 (ANNEX G). FROM THAT LETTER THE FOLLOWING SUMMARY OF THE AUSTRALIAN POSITION ON AN INDIAN OCEAN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION IS DERIVED:

A) THE AGREEMENT SHOULD NOT IN ANY WAY QUALIFY OR DEROGATE FROM US COMMITMENT TO AUSTRALIA OR UNITED STATES FREEDOM TO ACT UNDER THE ANZUS TREATY;

B) US/AUSTRALIAN DEFENSE COOPERATION SHOULD NOT BE AFFECTED; AND

C) US NAVAL VESSELS SHOULD CONTINUE TO VISIT WESTERN AUSTRALIAN PORTS AND ENGAGE IN EXERCISES WITH THE DEFENSE FORCE OFF WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

"PRIMA FACIE" ANY US PROPOSAL INVOLVING LIMITATIONS ON THE DEPLOYMENT OF LAND-BASED US STRIKE AIRCRAFT TO AUSTRALIA WOULD RUN COUNTER TO THE AUSTRALIAN POSITION THUS REPRESENTED.
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THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEFENSE OF THE METROPOLITAN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA, INCLUDING THE INDIAN OCEAN LITTORAL, IS GEOPGRAPHICALLY INDIVISIBLE. BY NO CONCEIVABLE CRITERION OTHER THAN THAT OF IMMEDIATE MILIRARY EXTREMITY COULD THE GEOPGRAPHIC ASPECT OF THAT RESPONSIBILITY BE DIMINISHED.

THE ANZUS TREATY EMBODIES A UNITED STATES COMMITMENT, SUBJECT TO CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES TO "ACT TO MEET THE COMMON DANGER." THAT COMMITMENT IS ACCEPTED TO DERIVE ITS PRESENT SIGNIFICANCE FROM THE UNIVERSAL UNDERSTANDING BY AUSTRALIA, THE UNITED STATES AND OTHERS, THAT IT APPLIES TO THE DEFENSE OF AUSTRALIA AS A WHOLE. ANY OTHER UNDERSTANDING WOULD BE UNACCEPTABLE TO THE AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY AND GOVERNMENT. AS WELL IT WOULD INTRODUCE A STRATEGIC AMBIGUITY DETRACTING SERIOUSLY FROM THE DETERRENCE WHICH IN PEACE ANZUS PROVIDES.

THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT DOES NOT HOLD A PRACTICAL POLITICAL OPTION TO REINTERPRET OR APPEAR TO REINTERPRET THE ANZUS TREATY OR TO CONCUR IN AN ACTUAL OR PERCEIVED

US INTERPRETATION OF THAT TREATY IN A WAY WHICH WOULD
REDUCE THE ASSURANCE WHICH IT PROVIDES TO ANY ELEMENT OF
THE AUSTRALIAN POPULATION OR METROPOLITAN TERRITORY.

THE ANZUS TREATY HAS DEVELOPED, BY LONG PRACTICE AND
ESTABLISHED PUBLIC AND GOVERNMENTAL UNDERSTANDING, A PRAC-
TICAL STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE WHICH IS AS LIVELY IN THE
PRESENT ERA OF PEACE AS, HOPEFULLY, IT WOULD BE IN THE
CONTINGENCY OF WAR. THE PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THIS
HAVE INVOLVED THE DEPLOYMENT OF US FORCES FROM TIME TO TIME
TO AUSTRALIAN TERRITORY, ESPECIALLY FOR PURPOSES OF
EXERCISES. RESTRICTIONS ON SUCH DEPLOYMENTS HAVE REFLECTED
SOLELY THE PRACTICAL AND POLITICAL CONCERNS OF THE RESPECTIVE
GOVERNMENTS. THEY HAVE NOT INCLUDED CONSTRAINTS DERIVING
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FROM CONFLICTING INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS OF THOSE GOVERN-
MENTS. INDEED IT HAS BEEN A MAJOR POLICY CONCERN OF THE
AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT RIGOROUSLY TO AVOID -- E.G., IN THE
FIELD OF INTERNATIONAL DISARMAMENT NEGOTIATIONS AND COMMIT-
MENTS -- ANY INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT WHICH WOULD IMPAIR
THE FREEDOM OF THE ANZUS PARTNERS TO DEPLOY OR EMPLOY
MILITARY FORCES IN WHATEVER MANNER WAS BEST SUITED TO THEIR
JOINT MILITARY INTERESTS. THE DEPLOYMENTS THUS OCCURRING --
INCLUDING RECIPROCALLY -- HAVE REAL SIGNIFICANCE FOR
DEMONSTRATION OF DOMESTIC FAITH IN ANZUS AND FOR ITS
EXTERNAL DETERRENT INFLUENCE.

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FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2879

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 CANBERRA 2527

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FOR EA AND PM ONLY

OF NO LESS IMPORTANCE IS THE PRESENT RIGHT OF THE US, ACTING WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF ANZUS, TO DEPLOY FORCES INTO AUSTRALIA FOR PURPOSES GOING BEYOND MILITARY EXERCISES INCLUDING SPECIFICALLY DETERRENCE -- WHETHER PRIMARILY IN ITS OWN INTERESTS OR DIRECTLY IN THE INTERESTS OF AUSTRALIA. RESTRICTION OF THAT FREEDOM IN RELATION TO AUSTRALIAN TERRITORY GENERALLY WOULD SUBTRACT FROM THE STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE OF ANZUS BOTH TO AUSTRALIA AND TO POTENTIAL ADVERSARIES OF AUSTRALIA AND FOR THE UNITED STATES. RESTRICTION OF IT IN RELATION TO SELECTED PARTS OF AUSTRALIAN TERRITORY WOULD (LEAVING ASIDE THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL IMPACT ON THE "NEUTRALIZED" WESTERN PARTS OF AUSTRALIA) UNDERMINE PUBLIC ACCEPTANCE OF ANZUS IN AUSTRALIA AS WELL AS PREJUDICING THE DETERRENT SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TREATY. IT WOULD GIVE RISE TO APPREHENSIONS -- OR EXPECTATIONS -- THAT UNDER NEW CIRCUMSTANCES THE US MIGHT BE WILLING ALSO TO COMMIT ITSELF TO ADDITIONAL CONSTRAINTS.

LEAVING ASIDE THE ANZUS COMMITMENT, IT IS DOUBTFUL WHETHER THE UNITED STATES ADMINISTRATION WOULD, IN THE CONTEXT OF ITS GLOBAL POLITICAL CONCERNS, GIVE HIGH PRIORITY SPECIFICALLY TO THE RETENTION IN PEACETIME OF UNRESTRICTED US MILITARY ACCESS TO THE WESTERN AUSTRALIA
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HINTERLAND. VIEWED IN THE BROADER STRATEGIC CONTEXT HOWEVER THERE ARE GROUNDS TO QUESTION WHETHER EVIDENT AND LONG-TERM US STRATEGIC OPTIONS POTENTIALLY AVAILABLE UNDER ANZUS SHOULD BE QUALIFIED, ACTUALLY OR APPARENTLY, AND FOR AN INDEFINITE PERIOD IN THE INTERESTS OF EASING IMMEDIATE BUT NOT NECESSARILY PERMANENT US PROBLEMS ARISING FROM USSR MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN CERTAIN LITTORAL STATES OF THE INDIAN OCEAN.

OPTIONS CONFERRED UPON THE US BY ANZUS POTENTIALLY FACILITATE LONG-TERM US MILITARY ACCESS NOT ONLY TO THE INDIAN OCEAN GENERALLY BUT INTO THE ASIAN AREA AND THE TRADE ROUTES LYING TO THE NORTH OF AUSTRALIA. IN AND IN RELATION TO ALL THESE AREAS WE SEE INTERNATIONAL PERCEPTIONS OF EXISTING US STRATEGIC OPTIONS TO BE IMPORTANT, FOR REASONS GOING WELL BEYOND THE SPECIAL CONCERNS OF AUSTRALIA ALONE.

WE RECONGNIZE THAT SOME US AUTHORITIES COULD TAKE THE VIEW THAT THE RESTRICTION OF US NAVAL OR AIR STRIKE DEPLOYMENTS TO OR WITHIN AUSTRALIA FOR DETERRENT OR OPERATIONAL PURPOSES SHOULD BE ACCEPTED IN NORMAL PEACETIME CIRCUM-

STANCES BECAUSE EXERCISE BY THE US OF ITS RIGHT TO ACT UNDER A "FORCE MAJEURE" CLAUSE WOULD FREE THE US TO UNDERTAKE THESE DEPLOYMENTS WHERE A SPECIFIC DETERRENT OR OPERATIONAL EFFECT WAS REQUIRED. THE FACT REMAINS HOWEVER, THAT EVEN IF THE EFFECT SOUGHT WERE ONLY REGIONAL, THE NECESSARY FREEDOM COULD BE ACHIEVED BY THE US ONLY AT THE PRICE OF PUTTING AT RISK THE TOTALITY OF ITS AGREEMENT ON MUTUAL RESTRAINT IN THE INDIAN OCEAN WITH THE USSR.

OPTIONS NOW UNDER CONSIDERATION BY THE US COULD LIMIT THE FREEDOM OF THE US TO ACT IN SUPPORT OF AUSTRALIA'S
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BEST INTERESTS IN THE FUTURE. IT IS ONE THING FOR THE UNITED STATES TO FLY IN, TEMPORARILY WITHOUT NEED OF INTERNATIONAL JUSTIFICATION, A FORMATION OF STRIKE AIRCRAFT (AS A DEMONSTRATION, LET US SAY, TO AN AGGRESSIVE INDONESIA). IT IS ANOTHER TO HAVE TO DECIDE THAT SUCH A DEMONSTRATION OF MOBILITY AND CONCERN TO SATISFY AUSTRALIAN WISHES FOR A DETERRENT GESTURE WOULD REQUIRE THE ABROGATION OF AN AGREEMENT WITH A POWER POSSESSING GLOBAL STRENGTH ON ALL FRONTS -- INCLUDING SOME OF VASTLY GREATER STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE THAN AUSTRALIA.

BEARING IN MIND THE OVERRIDING IMPORTANCE OF EACH SUPERPOWER TO THE OTHER, ANY AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT WOULD PREFER NOT TO BE PLACED IN A POSITION IN WHICH US MILITARY DEPLOYMENTS TO ANY PARTICULAR PART OF AUSTRALIA IN CIRCUMSTANCES OF THREAT TO AUSTRALIA WOULD AUTOMATICALLY DESTABILIZE OR PUT AT RISK THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SUPERPOWERS.

THE INTERESTS OF THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT ARE TO AVOID THIS DILEMMA, IN WHICH THE US WOULD HAVE TO BALANCE TWO CONFLICTING INTERESTS. AUSTRALIAN INTERESTS LIE IN INHIBITING ANY SUPERPOWER AGREEMENT WHICH WOULD OVERLIE OR BE SEEN TO OVERLIE THE ANZUS TREATY, OR WHICH WOULD DEPEND FOR ITS CONTINUING VALIDITY UPON A SUBTRACTING FROM THE US FREEDOM TO ACT UNDER THAT TREATY. WHETHER WE CAN SUCCEED IN PERSUADING THE US THAT THESE CONCERNS -- OF UNDOUBTED IMPORTANCE TO US -- SHOULD COUNT MORE THAN THE ADVANTAGES OF AN AGREEMENT WITH THE SOVIET UNION IS ANOTHER MATTER.

OUR OWN APPRECIATION OF THE WIDER US STRATEGIC INTERESTS THAT ARE SERVED BY SUSTAINING FULL FREEDOM OF ACTION UNDER ANZUS WOULD INDICATE HOWEVER THAT THE PRESENT SITUATION IS NOT ONE IN WHICH AUSTRALIAN AND US INTERESTS MUST BE WEIGHED AGAINST EACH OTHER. AS WE SEE IT THE US IS REQUIRED TO MAKE CAREFUL JUDGEMENTS BETWEEN US INTERESTS WHICH ARGUE FOR
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DIFFERENT CONCLUSIONS.

GIVEN THE GROWTH OF SOVIET NAVAL POWER, SUCCESS IN THE
PRIMARY US OBJECTIVE OF AN INDIAN OCEAN AGREEMENT, STABILIZING
THE MILITARY PRESENCE OF THE US AND THE USSR, WOULD HAVE
LONG-TERM ADVANTAGES FOR THE AUSTRALIAN DEFENSE INTEREST
AS WELL AS DISADVANTAGES. ACCEPTING THIS, IT REMAINS THE
CASE THAT AUSTRALIA WOULD NEED TO BE PERSUADED THAT THE
ADVANTAGES FLOWING TO THE AUSTRALIAN DEFENSE INTEREST
FROM SPECIFIC MEASURES OF SUPERPOWER MILITARY DETENTE IN
THE INDIAN OCEAN WERE SUFFICIENTLY REAL, SUBSTANTIVE AND
ABIDING TO OVERRIDE THE SHORT AND LONG TERM DISADVANTAGES --
POLITICAL AND STRATEGIC -- THAT WOULD BE ENGENDERED BY
THAT AGREEMENT. END TEXT.

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